

“Welcomed and Unwelcomed Philosophies”

Arman Hovhannisyan

A [discussion](#) on PhilPapers.org, initiated by myself, has prompted me to write this sketch.

The topic of the thread is: “Peer-reviewed journals and other publications on Philosophy: do they promote, or, on the contrary, hinder the development of philosophical thinking? What is reviewed in them, why and by whom? Does it not look like a certain kind of censorship?”

Bringing together the opinions expressed by philosophers during this discussion /which I am sure is far from ending yet/, I got the impression that they could be reduced to three groups of assertions.

The first one is that there are many problems connected to the peer-reviewing process in publishing on Philosophy, and as much as I remember, all the participants of the forum, at least up to date, agree on this.

The second group of assertions is that despite all its shortcomings, the peer-reviewing process with regard to Philosophy is necessary for ensuring the quality of the papers published in one philosophical journal or another and their compliance with the academic standards followed by the scholarly philosophers.

One of the supporters of this thesis suggests that anyone failing to get the reviewers’ approval for his papers, self-publish on either his personal website or some other venues, PhilPapers.org or Amazon.com, for example, keep himself out and far from those practicing academic standards and write what he wants – for the sake of his “love of wisdom”, which, one can suppose, has nothing to do with the true, scientific, academic Philosophy.

Another adherent of the above-mentioned thesis suggests that anyone failing to get the reviewers’ approval for his papers challenge those reviewers and, along with them, the above-mentioned philosophers’ establishment, constituting a certain kind of “closed club” of philosophers, dictating their rules and tastes to others. Self-publishing seems to be unacceptable for this philosopher, though I cannot understand why.

Anyway, both of them, as well as the overwhelming majority of the participants of the discussion, share the view that changes are must in this area, and the question is what changes.

And finally, the third one is my own opinion, and my impression is that none of participants of the forum shares my approach, that no reviewing must be practiced in case of publications on Philosophy, and every work on Philosophy must be published and available to philosophers, if only *it gives a philosophical picture of the world*. I am

confident also that there are no objective standards which can prevent one's philosophical work from being published, if only such a picture is given.

While sharing the viewpoint that anyone not getting the reviewers' approval for his work can, and moreover – must publish it in any available venue, nevertheless, I am not of the opinion that this means keeping oneself out and far from the philosophers' community. On the contrary, I am sure that only in such a venue the free exchange of ideas between philosophers is possible, so publishing there means coming into the philosophers' community with one's ideas and presenting them to that community's judgment. It means also, to some extent, challenging the established rigid patterns which are typical to the philosophical mind of one era or another, when some philosophical ideas or theories become dominant, and the adepts of those ideas and theories become some kind of dictators in their field.

It came out during the discussion that getting published in reviewed journals or other venues on Philosophy was an important step in any philosopher's academic carrier. Well, then what Philosophy is true one: the "pure" Philosophy, practiced for its own sake, a product of free and independent thinking, or the one tangled in conjuncture and conditionality, the main goal of the creator of which is to gain the approval of the above-mentioned "club"? I can assert for sure that the philosophical mind is developing thanks to the adherents of the first of these approaches, and that every great philosopher whose name is known to us was a revolutionary in this field.

After all, suppose that a philosopher is the reviewer of a paper by his opponent: it's absurd, isn't it? Democritus vs. Plato, Locke vs. Descartes or Leibnitz, Marx vs. Hegel or Kant... What standards would each of them have to follow in order not to get slammed by his reviewer, empowered to make decisions on the value of their work? Fortunately for Philosophy, they escaped such a fate. And unfortunately, there were philosophers, indeed, who were not so lucky: the names of Copernicus, Galileo were mentioned by one of the participants of the forum. And nevertheless, even the huge obstacles these thinkers faced *did not* prevent their views from being made public, the proof of which is the fact that we are aware of their activities.

So can there be two kinds of Philosophy, one welcomed by the philosophical community and unwelcomed one? I do not mean the different philosophical systems and theories, schools and doctrines, methods and so, I mean Philosophy as a discipline, as a specific area of activities led by those who are called philosophers. Can one Philosophy be more Philosophy than another one? Of course, that's absurd. It either is or is not Philosophy.

During the discussion, I mentioned the examples of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, I would add here the ancient Greeks, whose works are like poetic writings rather than scientific papers. And nevertheless, they are as much and even much more philosophers than those hiding empty thoughts and stillborn ideas behind properly formulated and well stated sentences with everything needed for reviewers' approval.

There cannot be two kinds of Philosophy, one complying with some standards and practiced by the scholarly philosophers and one not fitting these standards and practiced by “pseudo-philosophers”, “loving wisdom”.

Philosophy can be one, and it is the discipline aimed at giving a philosophical picture of the world. If such a picture is given, and it is truly a *philosophical* one, then the philosopher has done the task, regardless of how much scientific or poetic his or her work is.

The above-mentioned word, *philosophical*, might mean what scholarly philosophers call “standards”, I do not know, but even if so, those are not the ones practiced by philosophers-reviewers nowadays, because otherwise a great deal of the philosophical legacy just could not have reached us.